

Impact of External Pressures on Academic Performance: Mental Health Resiliency

The purpose of this study was to determine if academic expectations on performance can increase stress levels and decrease mental health among college students. Researchers believed that academic expectations from family, peers and educators within university settings greatly increase stress levels among students as a result of expectations of course success and high grades. Previous research substantiated that increased pressure from external influence can negatively impact academic performance, and both the physical and mental health of students (Scott, 2009). Research methodology utilized for this study was quantitative, non-experimental, cross-sectional design ($n=128$). The instrument measured the exposure of academic expectations and its subsequent outcome, increased stress. Descriptive and inferential statistics were analyzed. The majority of the students were female (60.8%) and instate (90.6%). Mean external pressures scores for participants was reported as high ($M = 25.81$). Approximately half (56.7%) of participants responded they often are able to meet the academic standard of others and most believe there are going to graduate from college (85.9%). Overall, participant stress scores were very high ($M=33.82$). More than half of students ($n=63$) responded that tests gave them a panic. ANOVAs indicated statistical significant differences academic expectations by race and GPA ($p<0.05$). International students experienced the highest academic pressures. Pearson correlations established the relationship between academic expectations and stress as statistically significantly and positively correlated ($p=0.01$, $r=0.597$). Recommendations include that students balance academic pressures and external expectations with internal mindfulness and effective coping mechanisms to increase mental health resiliency.